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THE USDA-STATE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

I'm pleased to be with you this morning, and wish I could stay for the entire conference. It's a very important one for agriculture and forestry, because, via this conference, we are officially--and informally as well--welcoming the new research administrators among you to a very select fraternity. . .a fraternity that carries a great responsibility. . .and a fraternity that has the opportunity for great impact on our country and its future.

For research is vital, productive, and part of our country's hope for the future.

That has been demonstrated by the long line of research administrators and the scientists we have worked with in the past.

Now it is your turn to take charge. And that's important to us.

The occasion is noteworthy for another development: the formalization of our USDA relationship with the 1890 universities and Tuskegee--the historically black colleges of the South--through clearly designated formula funding of their research programs in Title XIV, of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977.

Those of you from those institutions are the first "class" of new research administrators under this new arrangement. We are very happy to have you here, and I want to give you a special welcome.

I also note that there are some "old-timers" here. I don't know whether you have been sentenced to take a refresher course, or whether you have just avoided our previous SEA/Cooperative Research nets to get you here.

In any case, I'm pleased to see you all here. The main purpose of this

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Remarks by M. Rupert Cutler, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Conservation, Research, and Education, before the SEA/CR Workshop for Cooperating State Research Administrators, Washington, D.C., May 8, 1978.

conference is to help you become better acquainted with the Science and Education Administration and with procedures related to federally funded State research programs.

But I know there will be other benefits. The chance to talk among yourselves, for instance. The chance to learn how to get around Washington, D.C. a bit if you haven't had this opportunity before. The chance to find out how others do the job that you do. . .and the obstacles and opportunities they face.

I have a keen appreciation of the challenges and difficulties--as well as successes--you are involved in as research administrators in the States. I saw this research business from the State side while I was on the staff at Michigan State University. My salary there was partially paid with McIntyre-Stennis funds.

You represent some 60 percent of the publicly-supported agriculture and forestry research effort of the country. The contribution your research units make to our State-Federal cooperative research effort is very important.

There have been a number of important and far-reaching developments during the past year or so that will continue to have major impact on all of us in this area of responsibility for some time to come. I'll discuss some of them briefly; other speakers during the conference will dwell on separate aspects in more detail.

First, we've had a number of excellent efforts to delineate research needs in various subject-matter fields. Current efforts began with the Kansas City Food Research Needs conference in 1975. Then the home economists spent a year developing their research needs and priorities.

The foresters have just completed a series of regional and national conferences for the same purpose. The foresters were especially successful in getting users of forestry research involved with them in identifying research needs.

There are similar stirrings in other discipline areas--soil and water conservation, and communications, for example. And I'm sure a number of these also will result in clarifying research needs and priorities for the years ahead.

I feel these conferences and efforts are an indication of some of the growing excitement and foment going on in research right now. We're doing some of the most comprehensive joint planning ever. I'm sure all this effort will pay off for research and for our country in the long run.

Our State-Federal partnership works well. We're doing some things now that will improve it even further. We need your help to make it even better.

The constant question is: How can we best arrange things to assure that this partnership is a two-way process--that the partnership realizes its potential for our society--and that we make the very best and most productive use of the resources we share among us?

We must make sure our partnership is serving the people of this country in the best way possible. I'm known for my interest in and commitment to environmental improvement. Having the best human environment possible is extremely important.

But I also realize--as you do--that the farmer must make a living. This is one of the dilemmas--one of the challenges--that face you and me. How do we resolve these two sometimes opposing necessities? How do we orient our research so that it takes both into account as much as possible?

I certainly recognize that the farmer has necessarily always been an environmentalist. It is our job to make him both a better environmentalist and a better farmer over the long haul.

Our need in forestry has some of the same aspects. How can we make the forests of our nation produce the way they should and still maintain the

quality of our environment? Again, those of us responsible for research cannot dodge this question as a major challenge.

Next, I want to comment on aspects of the reorganization efforts we have been going through in USDA. I know that Jim Nielson will be talking to you next about the Science and Education Administration (SEA) reorganization. And I don't want to steal his thunder. But I do want to emphasize some points concerning what is going on.

One thing the Department has not worked at hard enough over the past years has been its responsibilities for diffusing new knowledge and ideas. We plan to change this. This will be particularly true in the area of natural resource information; we simply do not have the information diffusion system in this area that we do for commercial agriculture. We must develop it.

We are serious about getting feedback from users, consumers, the research community, and others about and for our programs. We had our first meeting of the new Joint Council on Food and Agricultural Sciences the end of April. This is just one step of many we will be taking to this end.

We're serious about maintaining and improving the State-Federal partnership. In SEA, for example, our plans are to bring many State people in on temporary assignments to help us. SEA/Cooperative Research has had a long history of doing this. We want to expand that kind of interaction. We plan to see that over a third of the SEA staff in the areas of program planning, evaluation, and impact will be State people on these assignments.

While I'm at it, I might as well talk directly to some concerns I know exist because of reorganization and what has happened in the Federal budget process.

Our intent at the Federal level is to strengthen and support the partnership concept. We definitely want to continue and to strengthen the ability of the

states to contribute to this partnership. At the same time, we are hoping to strengthen not just the universities and particularly the land grant universities. We are trying to involve as much talent and effort from wherever it may come in helping agriculture and forestry.

We want to continue the cooperative funding of State programs.

We've had some hard choices to make over the 1979 budget. We've had to get the competitive grants program going. We have to expand the base of scientists working for agriculture and forestry. But, as you know, there are limited funds for these purposes.

By and large, your research units have a solid base of funding--a rounded base of funds from State, Federal, and other sources. We must maintain that and see that it grows. But we also must expand our research base. To do that, we have had to have faith that the solid base you operate from will continue. And faith that it could recover from a temporary budget setback. But also faith that now is the time to build the expanded base we need.

The Hatch funds in the 1979 proposed budget have been cut. But hopefully in the long run it will have been for the best. And will not have hurt us in a total sense--but bettered us instead. "Hard money" programs are now low priority with us. But they are only part of what we are striving to develop and establish in the way of continuing research base for our country.

A statement in the April 21 Science magazine by Emilio Daddario is particularly relevant for us today. These are some of "Min" Daddario's thoughts:

In today's world, with its rapid change, inordinate social pressures, and countless demands for a "quick-fix," the problems for science are compounded by the ways in which research funds are allocated among competing priorities. It has never been my belief that science must claim the center of the state, but rather that it has an important role in many of our problems that require the application of science and technology for at least part of their solution. Even under the best of conditions--when we learn to explain how and when to apply science and technology and how and when not to as well--there will continue to be serious competition for resources. The greater problem now, and in any more hopeful future, is in the wisest division of those funds.

Recently, Dr. Francis D. Moore, chief of surgery at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston, said, "We think it's a mistake to target money for diseases like cancer. It's more important to fund the study of the cell wall or the cell membrane which in the long run may provide you with the clues you need to fight cancer." In placing our science bets, the lessons of the past would argue for the support of science teams headed by outstanding science leaders as a way to improve scientific research. Whatever our planning, however good our intentions, to overcome the problems that beset us, the improvement of our scientific research must necessarily precede the application of its results. Closely associated with this planning function is the idea of multiyear budgeting. I know of no field of human endeavor for which stable multiyear funding is more appropriate than that of research and development whose product is an expanded tax base and an improved ability of our society to pay its way. . .

We must recognize, of course, that it will always prove difficult to get money to spend now on future promises. The research dollar is extremely vulnerable whenever it is forced into direct competition with the defense dollar or the welfare dollar. Since anything with a humanitarian, security, service, or other popular appeal is likely to take priority over scientific research, there is the added tendency toward disruptive funding fluctuations. Although I cannot argue that this is always wrong, I do feel that steady and predictable funding will avoid inefficiency and waste, which are also the consequence of sudden changes, up or down, in research budgets. A policy that assures minimal fluctuations for an established period of time requires that the science and education provisions of the federal budget are looked at as an integral program of prime importance.

Another thing that our reorganization is doing is giving us the opportunity of making more of such services as the Current Research Information System (CRIS), the AGRICOLA bibliographic service, and the Current Literature Awareness Service. While the first two of these have been available to State people before, the latter has not. And we hope that as a package, these three services will provide much that will help research scientists and administrators, as well as users.

I hope we also will be able to develop more extensively such information networks as WESTFORNET, being developed by the Forest Service and its university partners in the western half of the country.

You, your scientists, and your information staffs have a great responsibility to see that what we learn from research is diffused to those who can use it. The research job is not done until this takes place.

It is easier for a State research administrator to duck this responsibility--because he or she can always say "that's Extension's job." But that's a copout! It is your job to see that it is done, however it may be carried out or whoever does it.

Speaking of Extension reminds me of teaching. We in USDA have for the first time a role in support of agricultural teaching in higher education as a result of the Farm Bill of 1977 and Title XIV. We're working right now on spelling out exactly what that means--and how we and your universities can work best in this area.

Just a few other statements about reorganization:

1. We're going to improve the interactions among the various groups that are joining hands in SEA. We want stronger interaction between Extension and Federal research. We want stronger interaction between the Federal side and the State side. We want more interaction and cooperation among the states.
2. We want to improve our capacity to evaluate and analyze the needs of agriculture and rural life--so that research and Extension can better mobilize to meet those needs.
3. We want to be sure that the public gets a larger voice in our decisions, so that we can improve our effectiveness.
4. We are working out our new role in aquaculture--a field that could be very important to the future of our country.
5. We are looking for ways that agriculture can contribute to the energy field.
6. We are examining basic and applied human nutrition knowledge and research--to see how we can make more major contributions there.

7. Finally, we are working with many other agencies and groups to see that our views and needs are taken into account in some of the vital decisions being made today about agriculture. One example only--we have been working on agreements with the Environmental Protection Agency where we reach mutually agreeable understandings and actions to protect both the public and the farmer.

As you are aware, this is difficult to do! But at least our heart is in the right place!

So--you can see that we are busy. And that we must have your ideas and help in all this. Together--as a true partnership--we can get it all done.

We're now into the second century of the State experiment stations. The first 100 years saw some great things come out of research for our nation and the world. The challenge to you--and to me--is to see what we can do to make our research programs of this second century really meet the challenges of today--and mean something vital and important for all of us. . .and the Nation.

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